2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Selya, MuNgonde

764 765 828 by the dust, at some other funeral without having completed the ritual for his own parents, and the danger of the 'gasping cough' exists only when a widow, having lain with the heir, eats or drinks with her own relatives.

796 Everyone knows the connection between madness and the performance of the whole ritual and between coughing and the final act, but not everyone is conscious of the symbolism of the various events. For example, Mwakisisile, a middle-aged pagan man whom we knew well, could not interpret the details of the symbolism and he explained: 'Some ask about these things in the ritual, some do not ask. I have not asked. We only know, many of us, that in the ritual we drive the shade, who is here, away from the body, and that if we do not drive him away we run mad. But we do not understand the details of the ritual such as straining water through a leaf, or passing the baskets between the legs, so as to be able to say: "This detail means this." ' Those most conscious of the symbolism are the *abanyago*, the officiants at the family rituals and the priests of the communal rituals. Kasitile, the hereditary rain-maker of Selya, who was a close friend of Godfrey Wilson's, and formally presented him to his dead ancestors urging them 'not to be startled at a white face', was our foremost authority on the symbolism of the Selya ritual. He was more conscious of the symbolism than most people, but his interpretation was confirmed at almost every point by others. Kasitile was not paid for [124] information—none of our informants was—but he and Godfrey Wilson exchanged gifts from time to time in the manner customary among the Nyakyusa, and he often had a meal with us. Mwandisi, a very old blind chief living on the Lake-shore plain (MuNgonde) who was regarded by the Nyakyusa themselves as an authority on history and custom, was also a friend prepared to expound the [184] rituals. His interpretation contradicted Kasitile's on one point only—he denied that one purpose of the ritual was to bring back the shade into the house. Other informants, though less coherent, corroborated Kasitile's interpretation, which may therefore be taken as a general, not a personal one.

764 765 796 There are nine main themes in the ritual: first, the driving away of the dead from the dreams of his close kinsmen, and measures to prevent him 'brooding over them' (*ukobatela*)—the word is that used of a hen brooding over her chickens. Widows, in particular, must be separated from the shade of their husband before the heir (or any other man) dare have intercourse with them. Secondly, the